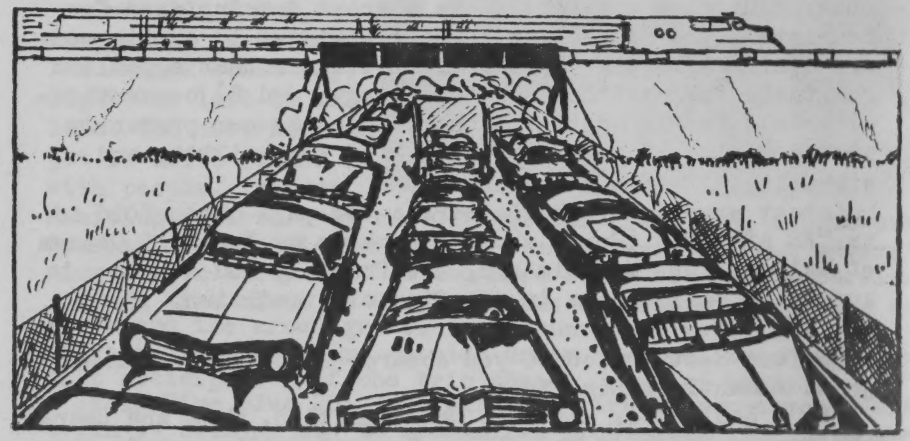
Of What Value Is A Bird That Can't Fly?



Thunderbird, Skylark, Firebird, Falcon. They may have their place, but what good are they when you want to move comfortably in a hurry?
Next time you travel, leave your wingless dodo at home. Get out of that cage, and take a Flyer! DO IT--just for a Lark!
(This ad contributed as a public service by RTN.)

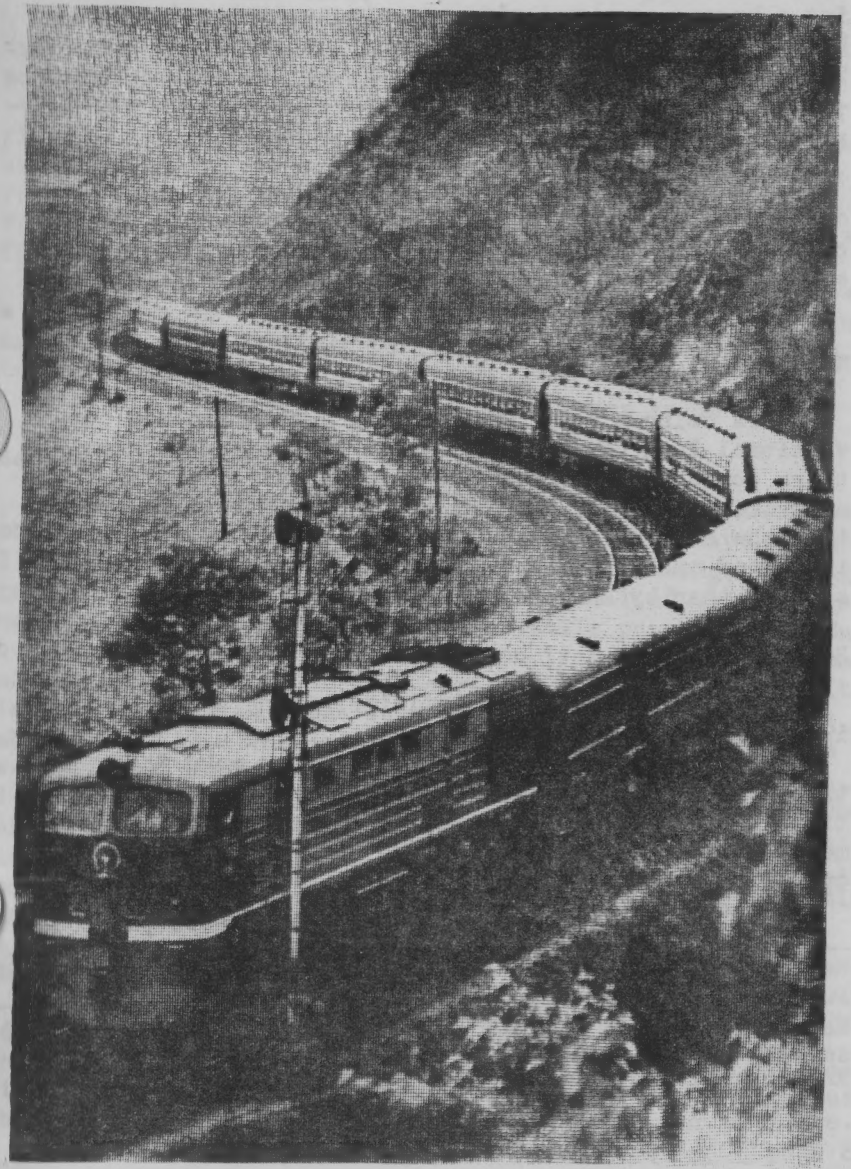
to:

FROM: Message Media
P.O. Box 9007
Berkeley CA 94709 USA

FIRST CLASS MAIL

RAIL TRAVEL newsletter

Vol. 1 No. 14
June 21, 1971



ON THE COVER: It seems all the rage lately to look overseas for interesting trains, what with the situation at home. Other publications are showing us Guatemala (RAILROAD, July), Russia (TRAINS, July), Peru (RAILROAD, August) on their covers. A look at Red China, then, is very timely, as trade relations with the U.S. are opened. The cover photo appeared originally on the color cover of CHINA PICTORIAL, 1966, No. 1. The photographer was Kuang Yao, and the only other information given is that the diesel engine is Chinese-made. It appears to be pulling a baggage car and nine non-air-conditioned coaches. Engine colors, top to bottom, are tan, red, and blue. The cars appear gray-blue with two yellow stripes.

LETTERS

I want to congratulate you on the fine job you are doing with your newsletter. When it comes into our office each month we read it carefully since it often contains information not readily available elsewhere.

Joseph Vranich, Executive Director
RAIL Foundation
Washington, D.C.

RTN is doing a good job covering Amtrak and the conventional long distance passenger trains, but I hope there could be much more coverage of rail rapid and mass transit in the major urban areas. It seems to me that the hopeful signs for rail passenger service are indicated much more by BART and other new rapid transit systems than by Amtrak and the conventional trains.

Norman Freitag
Berkeley, Calif.

There have been several articles giving a discouraging view of Amtrak operations.

My wife and I have had the occasion to make the rail trip from Seattle to Los Angeles under Amtrak operations. We felt that the experience was a great improvement over a similar trip in 1966 under the former SP operation.

Our ticketing arrangements were (continued on page 3)

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completed by telephone from Victoria B.C. to the BN-handled Amtrak ticket office in Seattle. These were satisfactory and without incident when we picked up the tickets at the King Street Station in Seattle.

The equipment was former Sunset Limited... The cars were clean; the meal service, although SP, was a considerable improvement from recent years on the Cascade and Daylight --no automated cafe cars.

The crews were polite and seemed enthusiastic to make the trip comfortable. Let's give them time to make any small adjustments to do a better job.

The BN tracks out of the King Street Station were rough riding... Some track work on the BN lines south of Seattle and the slow progress out of the station until we were on freight oriented tracks made us about 25 minutes late into Portland, but SP picked up most of this and we were only a few minutes late into Los Angeles.

Once again, let us be charitable. Amtrak is a little over a month old. We've wanted a resurgence in passenger service and I am a full believer in giving the new group a chance to show what they can do.

Let's ride the rails and encourage others to do so.

Frank Kislingbury
San Gabriel, Calif.

Since I am a passenger train fan (and rider), I have been observing Amtrak's trains in the L.A. area. To date, trains 1 and 2, the Sunset, have been very disappointing. The biggest noticeable change has been the removal of the baggage car. Dining and lounge services are still provided by a Hamburger-grill-lounge, and indigestion is provided by the omnipresent "Automatic Buffet" car. The Super Chief-El Capitan is the same, which means superior in all respects. Rumors abound that 1) a weekend-only "City of Las Vegas" will be established, either with or without UP steam engine 8444, 2) checked baggage on SP 1 & 2 will be reinstated for Alhambra, Pomona, and Indio. Time will tell what changes Amtrak is making in its L.A. area trains, but the most pleasing improvement so far has been that wonderful tri-weekly Seattle-San Diego train.

Michael C. Ayer
Sun Valley, Calif.

OUR APOLOGIES to all readers who ordered back issues and haven't received them. We are arranging to reprint some early issues that ran out, so your order will be complete. Please bear with us a little longer. Thank you for your patience.

A TRAGIC RAIL ACCIDENT

Amtrak's CITY OF NEW ORLEANS derailed about 12:30pm June 10 at Tonti, 5 miles from Salem, Ill. The Illinois Central train, southbound at over 90mph was carrying 200 people when a brake apparently locked in the lead engine, flattening a wheel which brought about a derailment. Ten persons were killed and 94 injured, many seriously. It was the first fatal accident since Amtrak began, and the worst since July 28, 1962 when 19 were killed in a PRR wreck in Pennsylvania.

AMTRAK ADDS NEW SERVICE

The NORTH COAST LIMITED was revived June 14 when BN train 25 left Minneapolis to connect with the EMPIRE BUILDER at Spokane. On June 16, train 26 headed east from Spokane to make a similar connection in Minneapolis. The experimental tri-weekly train is to serve the tourist area of Southern Montana and Yellowstone Park, according to Amtrak's June 10 press release. It said the train will run until Sept. 1, 1972 and will yield "hard data on providing service outside of the basic system, particularly the impact on ridership of the tri-weekly rather than daily service." Amtrak said the National Park Service stressed the need for a train to cut growing auto congestion and pollution, and that BN and tour operators saw the need for it to stimulate tourist business.

The train leaves Minneapolis 25 minutes before the EMPIRE BUILDER departure; eastbound it leaves Spokane 10 minutes later than the more northerly daily train. It leaves westbound Mon., Wed., and Sat. evenings; eastbound Mon., Wed., and Fri. nights. Originally the run was planned to follow the previous NORTH COAST LTD. route entirely, but a last-minute change routed it over the MAINSTREETER route between Fargo and Minneapolis, to provide stops at Detroit Lakes, Staples, and St. Cloud, all in Minnesota. Standard consist of the train is baggage, 48-seat coach, Traveller's Rest lounge (without snack service), full diner, dome coach, sleeper, slumbercoach, & dome lounge slpr.

West Virginia

The squeaky wheel gets the grease. Thus Senator Mike Mansfield got his Southern Montana route, and now Rep. Harley Staggers of West Virginia will get his wish starting in September when Amtrak will resume train service in that state and Maryland. Not yet official, the N.Y. Times announced the pending resumption over a 250-mile B&O route timed to the start of the Fall school year. Daily service will in part serve several colleges in the area. No other details were available.

stops added

Three stations will be added soon to the route of the Chicago-San Francisco train: Kewanee, Ill., Holdredge, Nebr., and Ft. Morgan, Colo. Service will start early in July.

schedules lengthened

Starting June 20 the schedules of the two daily Seattle-Portland trains will be lengthened by 10 minutes. Each train will reach its destination (each direction) 10 minutes later than before. The CASCADE schedule is unchanged. The new 3hr 40min run is still faster than the pre-Amtrak schedules of up to 4 hours.

Amtrak is requesting SP to reduce its Coast Daylight time by 10 minutes. No announcement has yet been made. The current trip takes 10hrs 10mins. It is also asking SP to reinstate passenger stops at Redding, Calif. on the CASCADE and at Deming, N.M. on the SUNSET.

second nationwide schedule

Amtrak will issue the second edition of its nationwide schedule on July 12. Amtrak's third nationwide newspaper ad or announcement, with the same format as previous ones, appeared June 14, again on a Monday. Metroliner announcements continue to appear in Eastern newspapers.

speaking of speed

By 1974, England will have running trains now under construction in Derby that will do 155 mph and run on existing track. They can cut the London-Edinburgh run by two hours. Israeli officials are interested in using such a train between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

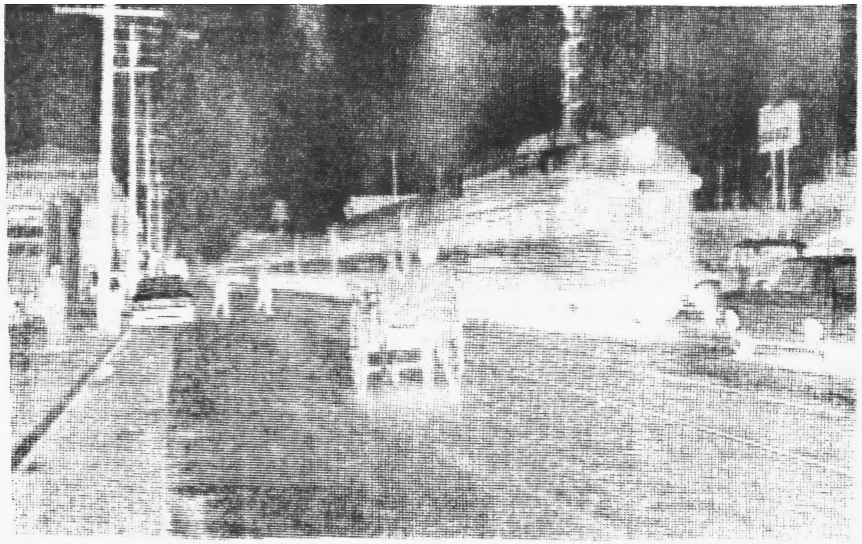
The New York Times has editorially castigated U.S. transportation officials for dragging their heels in the matter of developing new fast train systems. The Times said that when DOT Secretary Volpe attended a supersonic jet test flight in Europe, they could more profitably have been looking at West Germany's fast, electric, wheel-less train. Bonn is generously supporting such development. Said the Times: "Even though Europe already enjoys trains faster than the Metroliner, Europeans consider these merely the starting point for dramatic progress." The paper suggested the U.S. put unemployed aircraft manufacturers to work on fast, safe new train research.

comparing schedules

The latest NARP newsletter (May) has an enlightening comparison of U.S. train running times between the present and 20-30 years ago. In the vast majority of cases, running times have lengthened appreciably. Most striking example: the CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO takes almost 9 hours longer than in 1941.

a cable car death

The first fatality on a San Francisco cable car since 1967 occurred June 15 when a man riding on the outside running board on Mason Street was struck in a collision with a large truck attempting to park on the wrong side of the street. Nine other persons were injured.



The Zephyr That Never Blew

If you have one of those now-collector's-item first nationwide Amtrak schedules, you'll note that page 24 lists a certain train nos. 17 and 18, called the CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR, to be run over SP tracks from San Francisco/Oakland to Ogden, thence over the former ZEPHYR route through Colorado to Chicago. That train never ran, and the schedule was obsolete when issued. The story behind this illustrates what many believe to be a flaw in the constitution of Amtrak.

A revival of the esteemed ZEPHYR was Amtrak's plan to provide an attractive selling point for long-haul travel in the West. The original plan was to combine the best of the routes of SP's CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO and the WP-D&RGW-BN ZEPHYR run. A streamliner made up of ZEPHYR cars would run east over Donner Summit, on WP tracks in Nevada to Salt Lake City, then on through scenic Colorado via Rio Grande and Burlington to Chicago. But Amtrak had no power to enforce its plan unless all the railroads involved agreed.

The first to opt out was Western Pacific. Free of passengers for a year, it wanted nothing to do with the idea. Thus Amtrak had to change its route to go SP all the way to Ogden, thereby including that city in its system. The 37 miles from Ogden to Salt Lake had to be over UP track, the only UP rails in the entire system. That was the arrangement shown in the first Amtrak schedule.

However, in the last days of April, with final plans to run this train already underway, Rio Grande decided that rather than have passenger trains on their Colorado route perhaps indefinitely, they would refuse to join Amtrak, thus sabotaging plans for the ZEPHYR revival. Amtrak hurriedly turned to UP to utilize their route from Ogden to Denver, in the process cutting relatively populous Salt Lake out of the system and bringing in the state of Wyoming. Rio Grande had to continue to run its one remaining tri-weekly train, the RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR from Denver to Ogden, on its own for two years.

Those who have ridden Rio Grande's remaining train call it just a ghost of its former self. One can still transfer from the CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO at Ogden and ride through Colorado, but not many are likely to do so, since you must detrain at 4:00am and wait for the Rio Grande connection. When reader David Soderblom tried it early in May he had to wait until 7:40am for a single coach pulled by an SP engine which met the main train in Salt Lake. Since June 14, Rio Grande has changed departure time to 6:00am with a bus connection, not rail, to Salt Lake. Now at least you reach Denver at 9:00pm instead of 11:00 but still miss the Amtrak connection to points east. Westbound you leave Denver at 7:30am, reaching Ogden at 10:30pm. Thus you connect from Amtrak from Chicago, but not at Ogden.

Mr. Soderblom described his trip: "There were very few people on board. Coming from Ogden to Salt Lake, there were but two besides myself, and of course a conductor, porter, and brakeman. A couple more boarded at Salt Lake. The total number at any one time during the trip could not have exceeded 20." The consist was 3 F units, a yellow coach from the PROSPECTOR, CZ dome coach, diner, and CZ rounded dome observation car.

"The present trip is by no means an ordeal, it is simply nothing of what the CZ was, and it's still worthwhile just for the scenery. We did run on time all the way, and the crew was courteous. The original quality of the equipment still shows in its smooth, quiet ride, but it shows its age too in many ways. The cars were not as well maintained as they should have been, but at least were reasonably clean, with clean windows. I doubt that the cars will last as long as the train is required by law to run."

Now Rio Grande is said to be preparing to sell off its ZEPHYR sleepers, with June 30 the deadline for bids. It seems unlikely that another ZEPHYR revival can be made, though NARP points out that if Amtrak were operating its own service rather than contracting with individual railroads to run trains, the ICC could order Rio Grande to make its route available for Amtrak trains.

Meanwhile business on the substituted CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO is booming (see elsewhere in this issue), but what is perhaps America's most scenic route seems doomed to a freight-only status before long.

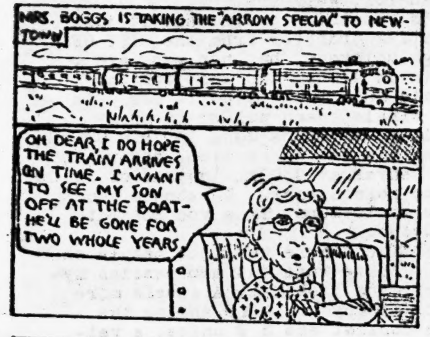
COMMUTING AND RAPID TRANSIT

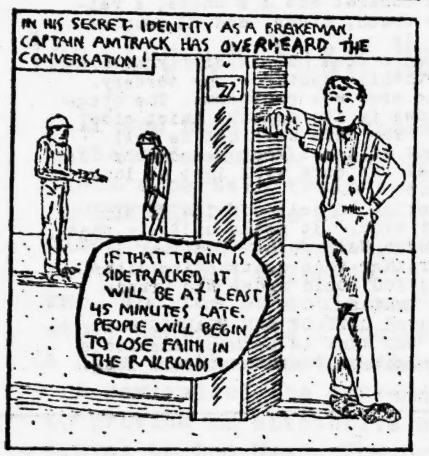
What appears to be a landmark victory for rapid transit over freeways took place in Toronto in early June. The Premier of the province of Ontario vetoed further construction of a new freeway through Toronto. The veto cannot be appealed. Instead of pouring more auto traffic into the city, rapid transit solutions will be emphasized. Similar cases are pending in Vancouver and Calgary, and the outcome of this one may influence those also. The vetoed freeway was already partially built.

The Committee for Better Transit, Inc. (Box 3106, Long Island City, NY 11103) holds its annual meeting June 29 at 135 E. 52nd St., New York. A new film, "Where do we go from here?" made by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, will be seen.

EXPRESS ADS will re-appear in the next issue of RTN (July 5)

CAPTAIN AMTRACK





CAPTAIN AMTRACK

KEEPING TRACK

...with Paul Rayton

(A regular RTN feature. Each issue presents another review-critique of a selected pre-Amtrak train.)

SPIRIT OF ST. LOUIS

Date: Friday, December 18, 1970

The would-be train passenger arriving eastbound in St. Louis has only one afternoon departure--at 5:00pm, 10 minutes before the scheduled arrival of the Missouri Pacific train from Kansas City and points west. This "disconnection" is so flagrant that one can only suspect an intentionally cynical attitude somewhere in the hierarchy of passenger departments. And this missed-connection situation had existed for several years. There were only two trains remaining to serve the east from St. Louis, both on Penn Central.

Our alternatives for the sojourn were train #32, which had left at 5:00pm anyway, or train #4 the next day. Besides that matter of the 5:00pm departure, train #32 would provide coaches only on the 24½-hour ride to New York, and would offer absolutely no food until 7:00am! On the other hand, if you were dead-set on taking the train, you could (as we did) hotel it overnight and leave the next day on #4, the SPIRIT OF ST. LOUIS, due out at 10:45am. This was a choice?

So Paul and Peggy, intrepid voyageurs, arrived at the St. Louis Union Station 30 minutes before the morning departure. The missed connection had cost us $13 plus taxes and tips at the hotel. For this reason, as well as Penn Central's generally exorbitant fare structure, and a contemplated change in Pittsburgh, we decided to ride coach. To my relief it looked as if the train would depart on time. As we approached the train I saw the nicely-lit interior of the lounge area and thought that would probably make it a bearable trip.

Forward from that we came to the single coach assigned to today's train. I identified it at once as an ex-NYC coach. The windows were very dirty, but we didn't care; that lounge had very clean windows. We climbed up into the coach, unassisted. It was dingy inside--dingy and dirty like a sleazy hotel's lobby. A wave of blistering hot air washed over us. "Gad!" said my wife, "they've got to be kidding!" We were early arrivals and had an unlimited choice of seats. There was one window in the entire car that was neither dirty nor cracked. How one window had become clean was baffling, but we grabbed the seat next to it.

I then walked back to look into the lounge. Pullman-Standard, named "Aspen Falls." Ex-PRR (and I believe ex-BROADWAY LIMITED) and pleasantly modern decor. Fluorescent lighting and a regulated temperature made it a completely different world from the coach in front. The official seal of the State of Rhode Island was mounted on one end wall. This lounge space occupied half the car; the rest consisted of a miniature pantry for the Attendant/Porter and four bedrooms of "revenue" space.

I went forward and brought my wife into the lounge and we sat down. Promptly at 10:45 we pulled out of the station. Moments later the Attendant was standing beside us. "I'm sorry, folks, but unless you have one of the bedrooms you're not allowed to ride in this car." I didn't believe my ears--thought he was kidding. "Why not?" I ventured. "The timetable said there was a lounge on this train, and this seems to be it." I might as well have talked to a brick wall. As usual on railroads, I--the customer--am always wrong, and while he was at least awkwardly diplomatic, I still couldn't fathom his insistence on this stricture from nowhere. He insisted I would be entitled to sit in his precious car only if I held a first class ticket or were to eat something from his snack bar--which wouldn't be open until 11:30.

Cowed, and not wanting to make too big a scene, we returned to the hot coach. Luck was with us there, for the motion of the train had jogged the thermostat into action and the temperature seemed to be heading down from "blistering" to "Mojave Desert."

Crossing the Mississippi, we headed on across Illinois. The track this train follows is a combination of former PRR and NYC routings. If either company had a superior roadbed back in their individual days, you would never guess it today. As we picked up speed, we began to sway and rock so violently that I seriously wondered what, exactly, was keeping us on the rails. To make matters worse, there were mechanical problems with the trucks of the coach that added a distinctive wobble to all the other motions we were feeling. As for emotions--desperation.

11:30--snack bar opens. We returned to the lounge's pleasanter setting. What might we buy so as to justify our use of the lounge? Well, there was no printed menu. The attendant told us verbally what he had: ham or cheese sandwiches, which we could wash down with mixed drinks or beer, soda, coffee, tea, or milk. We decided to split a ham sandwich (75¢). It came, cold, in a cellophane wrapper--packaged some indeterminate time earlier and presented to us on paper plate service. My wife's coffee (25¢) came in a cardboard cup, likewise my tea (25¢). To my surprise, he was actually able to supply real lemon for the tea.

The "first class" fare for the privilege of our sitting in here with not even a newspaper and being served with paper plates could have been an incredible additional $48.50 in rail fare alone. For that amount I'd rather sit in the coach any day.

Meanwhile, another group of four adults drifted in from the coach. They ordered coffee and rolls, and sat at a table relaxing. By and by, one of them broke out a deck of cards. The attendant was upon them in a flash: "Sorry, no card playing allowed in here. You can only eat at these tables." The people looked at him, incredulous. Eventually he sufficiently alienated them so they retreated to the coach--never to ride trains again.

I re-used my tea bag three or four times, and my wife ordered a soda to sip slowly. The attendant was obviously uneasy about our delaying tactics. An hour later, as I finished off a last, weak cup of tea, he came over and said, finality in his voice, "Now that's enough! I've got to insist that you go back to that coach! This place is for first class passengers!" I protested again, but in the end we were "ridden out on a rail" with assertions that he "has to do it, because there is a supervisor aboard." "Oh, yeah?" I retorted. "Why don't you introduce me to him because I could sure tell him a few things about his train! I've been thrown out of places a lot better than this one!" No reply.

By this time, thankfully, the coach had become a habitable temperature. All we had to contend with now was the still absolutely wretched roadbed. I would have to grade this a D-. Probably the bumpiest ride I've ever taken. An effort to read resulted in a record-speed headache. I decided that if these cars would stay on the rails with tracks like this, then derailings (which would be graded "F") must be virtually impossible. Naturally some of the problem derived from our speed. I clocked us at 75mph several times. High speed dramatically accentuates bad roadbed.

And I was still concerned over that matter of the lounge. I asked the "Trainman" if I could go back to the lounge to write a letter. (Lots of luck on that roadbed!) He said that it was all right with him but that the Porter had final say for the car. So, I went back and asked (there were no other writing surfaces anywhere). You guessed the result. Amid mutterings of dire fates, etc., I was remanded to the coach. A few minutes later the Trainman came over to ask what happened. I explained and he went back to the lounge to investigate. He returned and profusely apologized for the actions of the Attendant. He explained the long traditions of exclusive lounges and supposed that this man just hadn't adapted to the idea that the passenger train scene had changed in the last few years.

I felt sorry for the Trainman. He was a sincere, conscientious man trying against insuperable odds to do a good job for his passengers. We reiterated our desires to speak with any of the "Supervisors" allegedly aboard. The Trainman avoided that question, but only, I think, because he did not think the issue was worth a big argument. In subsequent wanderings, I discovered that at least two

of the four bedrooms in that car were occupied by men traveling on passes. They must have been officials of some sort, but whoever or whatever they were, it was apparent that they did not give a damn about their passenger service. Considering the predominant attitudes we encountered, I wouldn't be surprised if the man in bedroom C was the Vice Pres. in Charge of Employee Morale-Boosting, performing his job after the famous "Penn Central tradition": sleeping.

We careened on into Indiana, right on time. In Indianapolis our train more than doubled in length with the addition of a dining car and two sleepers. At last there were some other cars to explore--or to seek refuge in should our coach go on a heating binge again.

We overheard the Conductor discussing the passenger load: Total passengers, 78. Number of passengers riding free on passes, 37. Number of children, 12. (Ergo, number of paid riders: 29.)

During a late afternoon stop in Richmond, Indiana, one elderly lady looked out her window and said to her companion, "Look at that! It's raining out there, isn't it?" No, it wasn't, but I didn't have the heart to tell her. Her window was so dirty it just looked like rain. Actually, it was cool, clear and dry--beautiful December.

An encounter with the dining car Steward was next. I went in to ask him how long he would remain open, so we would be sure to get served before he closed for the night. His answer was a non-sequitur, "Why don't you sit down right here?" After a couple more unsuccessful attempts to communicate, I just thanked him and returned to the coach. At 6:30 we went to dinner.

The diner was full-sized and fairly well equipped. No more Sterling silverware, and linens had long since given way to paper placemats and napkins, but a large glass water carafe still graced the table. There was a respectable number of people eating, and we sat down, famished from the tribulations of the afternoon, ready for a good Penn Central dinner. Yes, in spite of everything bad said about the Penn Central, the PC full-size dining cars would generally put out a quite good meal if you got your food as part of a full dinner. If you bought just a sandwich, you'd pay a premium price and get less for your money.

Dinner list price was $4.25, including appetizer, entree, two vegetables, salad, rolls, dessert, and beverage. A wide selection was offered for all the courses. My particular favorite appetizer on the PC is the Consommé Mogador, one of the best consommés available anywhere. Entrees included swiss steak, filet of sole, roast turkey, and grilled pork chops.

The dinner was competently prepared, though many of the dishes were inadequately seasoned. Another problem was that they were not hot enough when they reached the table. This may have been partially explained by the fact that there was only one waiter for all 12 tables. The Steward refused to help. Actually, the waiter did an extraordinary job; he took all the orders, served or cleared all the tables with a minimum of delay, and what's more, never got flustered by the situation. That was his secret. Many men in similar position would let the demands overwhelm them and then turn surly and uncooperative as a defense. Our man was extremely capable--and this in a situation where some dining cars would have been carrying four waiters. The pumpkin pie for dessert was flaky-crusted and mellow good. I gave the waiter a good tip.

In Columbus, Ohio, the train grew again. During the station stop I watched employees loading Christmas mail into the baggage car. They worked slowly and sloppily, performing unchanged a ritual as old as railway mail carriage. During the proceedings, the carts ran over some packages that had fallen to the ground. These, too, were placed inside the car in the neat piles, sorted by cities. As soon as we started rolling again, the violent tossing of the car sent all the stacks of packages flying every which way in the car...

We rocketed along through the night, skimming across the heartlands of Ohio.

9:45pm, between Coshocton and Dennison: the last straw! We were racing along out in the middle of nowhere. I heard an engine go by, and realized a freight was passing. With no warning, a loud crash! The whole coach shook. We looked up, startled. Our window (the only good one, you recall) was now ruined--cracked and partially shattered, with a big dent in the metal window frame. Something had not been adequately tied down on that passing train and it chose our window to fall against. My wife leaned against me in terror, anticipating a second, perhaps worse blow. It never came, but one is enough. We ride thousands of miles on the rails every year--and on the Penn Central I for the first time really worried about our safety.

Later we sat in a now-darkened dining car to watch our approach to Pittsburgh along the Ohio River. We arrived right on time.

During the 20-minute stop in Pittsburgh I got out and looked around. Workmen were examining the exterior of the train. There was an impact mark along the length of the train at the level of the blow that broke our window back in Ohio. They had waited this 2½ hours to check the damage. Luck was with us--no other window casualties. But the men were not really concerned about the near-disaster. The big topic of conversation was the fact that we had come in on time! "This train hasn't been on time once in the last month," one of them remarked, "ever since they changed the timetable!" (Nov. 8th--when the schedule was lengthened by 11 minutes!)

During the stop we changed coaches, choosing instead an ex-PRR ("P-70") coach on the rear, a venerable old Tuscan red car with square, drafty windows. Maybe it was a bit noisier, maybe it rode a little worse than that car up front, but I was convinced by this time that the front coach was jinxed. Besides, this car (come from Cincinnati) was less crowded, and the windows were cleaner. The rest of the night we spent alternately dozing and watching the bright headlights of the engine highlighting the snowy landscape as we curved through the Pennsylvania mountains. Over Horseshoe Curve it was an impressive, dramatic sight--to be in this nice, warm car and see the engine working way up front, gliding along on snowy rails, silently casting a bright beam of light on cold, snow-covered granite. Winter's grasp already held these mountains firmly under control, yet we slipped through.

We left the flagging SPIRIT just outside Philadelphia. It was still running on time, but the feeling came over me, watching it pull out of the station, that whatever spirit might still reside in St. Louis, it certainly had long since departed from the SPIRIT OF ST. LOUIS.

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Next Issue: Paul Rayton on the BROADWAY LIMITED

QUOTES OF THE WEEK ***

"If Amtrak can do it for Mike Mansfield, why can't it do it for the Department of Interior, which would like to see a whole system of scenic railways established. Why can't special trains run to stops on our fast expanding network of hiking and biking trails--even allowing the bikers to load their bikes onboard?"

--Nick Thimmesch, Oakland Tribune, 6/15

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB ***

"Known as BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit), this 75-mile system, how 73% complete, expects to lure tens of thousands of Californians out of their beloved cars... Finally in 1946, construction began..."

--Christian Science Monitor, May 24

(Okay, CSM--it's been long and rough going, but must you keep rubbing it in?)

Passenger Watching At 16th St.

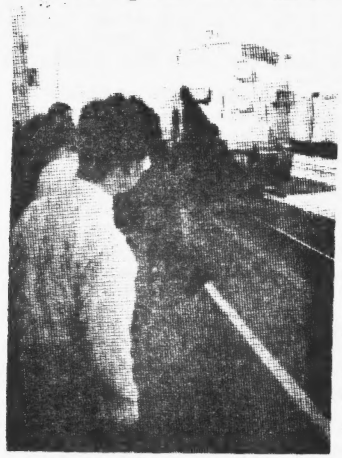
June 17: A hot, smoggy day in Oakland. The Amtrak Coast Daylight has left 10 mins late. The cavernous depot is still jammed with people. They're awaiting departure of the CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO. People are learning about this interesting train, even without advertising. Haven't seen such a mob here since the last excursion.

Train Time minus 5: Greyhound bus connection from S.F. arrives and the crowd grows. No announcement yet.

Train Time: Everyone outside under the cool overhang. Pleasant anticipation of the trip ahead. Crowd of happy faces.

Train Time plus 20: No train yet. First announcement--the train is delayed due to mechanical problems. Will leave yards shortly. At least they told us--that's a change. Excitement starting to wear off.

T.T. plus 35: Announcement--train has left the yards. The crowd moves closer to the track. Five minutes later it's loading. Excitement returns. A lovely train, clean & shiny Underpinnings freshly painted gray. Cars of all colors. Four coaches, four sleepers, SP dome lounge, BN diner, BN Traveller's Rest snack-lounge. It'll be lovely through the Sierras today.



T.T. plus 55: The CITY glides out of the station. Luscious aromas emanate from the diner and the snack car. The train appears to be about 2/3 full as it rolls past. First stop Sacramento.

SP's sleeping car patronage is said to be up 65% since Amtrak began. The rumor persists that the CITY will be changed from tri-weekly to daily service, but Amtrak will not confirm that, though its obvious familiarity with the rumor suggests it has been discussed in Washington. P.S.: June 19 was a repeat of the Thursday crowd. Things are looking up.

TRAINS IN THE MEDIA

It's no great revelation to point out that passenger trains--American trains, that is--have virtually disappeared from the advertising media. However, trains of other countries apparently are a great drawing card for tourists. The attraction is of two kinds: 1) exotic modern trains like the Japanese Bullet Train that appeal to our taste for exciting new technology; and 2) conventional or old-fashioned trains that appeal to our presently strong desire to return to a life of tranquillity and stability.

Latest example of the latter: a two-page centerfold ad in THE ATLANTIC (June) showing a photo by Karsh of Ottawa of Walter Scott and his son, two friendly and stable appearing railroaders in the fine old tradition. Read the ad:

"Walter Scott welcomes you aboard one of the continent's great romantic train rides.

"From Sault Ste. Marie to Hawk Junction, Wawa and Hearst, the steel ribbon of the Algoma Central Railway winds thru 321 miles of Northern Ontario wilderness that once had known no form of transportation but the Indian's canoe.

"In 1938 Walter Scott came to the railway; after a third of a century of railroading, he knows more about the legendary Agawa Canyon country than almost any man alive, and he's as accessible as the land is remote. He'll share with you his infinite fund of Algoma folklore as you ride the train through this land of defiant ramparts, rose-washed in the luminous northern air.

"You can leave Sault Ste. Marie early in the morning, spend two hours exploring the majestic Agawa Canyon and be back before bed-time.

"From your train window you glimpse the fortress walls of age-old granite, the white beards of waterfalls, the soft green carpet of spruce and pine. Unexpectedly, the train stops to pick up a band of fishermen with triumph in their eyes...or the whistle shrieks because a contemptuous moose has taken possession of the track."

It's in Northern Ontario, and the ad was apparently placed by that province. If such things pay off in tourism in Canada, why can't they in the U.S.?

We're stuck in the middle between dead tradition and unborn technology and groping to find our way out. We're clearly losing the war for fine rail transportation.

TRY TO RIDE AMTRAK